

**Matuszczak, Lisa**

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**From:** Griffin, Stephania  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 08, 2017 11:29 AM  
**To:** VHA 10A FOIA; (b) (6) (VHACO); Hipolit, Richard (b) (6)  
(b) (6) Matuszczak, Lisa; VHA 10B  
**Cc:** VHA FOIA SI Review  
**Subject:** Revised Substantial Interest (SI) Process

All,  
The VHA FOIA Office is modifying its Substantial Interest (SI) FOIA clearance process. Beginning next week, the VHA FOIA Office will follow the below process:

Weekly, the designated VHA FOIA Officer (currently Carol Farer) will send the SI Tracker spreadsheet to the designated program offices (10A, 10B, 10N, OSVA, OAR) at least 24 hours in advance of the weekly SI conference call. The designated VHA FOIA Officer will conduct a weekly call with the program offices to determine which offices require review of each SI request. The call is currently scheduled for Thursdays at 11am Eastern.

The designated VHA FOIA Officer will update the SI Tracker spreadsheet with the Program Offices that have indicated a review of the request is required prior to release. In the instance that a program office is not available for the weekly SI conference call, such offices will have until noon on Friday to provide the designated VHA FOIA Officer with a listing of requests requiring their review. Failure to respond by noon on Friday will lead to the assumption that such offices do not require review of any of the responses added during the given week. A Program Office that requests a review of a SI FOIA Request will be provided the documents, including the proposed initial agency decision (IAD), once available for release.

When a Program Office is provided the IAD and documents for a SI FOIA Request by the designed VHA FOIA Officer via email, the Program Office will be given one (1) week to clear the response. Program Offices should be cognizant that the review process is for situational awareness regarding VHA records being released and is not meant to be a review of the records to confirm the FOIA Officer's decision on release or whether information has been appropriately withheld. As a result, it usually should not take more than a week to clear a response.

If a response or request for additional information or time is not received within a week of receipt of the SI FOIA request email, the designated VHA FOIA Officer will notify the Program Office of the passage of the clearance deadline prior to moving the request forward. If no response is received, the SI FOIA request will move forward for release. If the Program Office indicates on the weekly SI conference call or via email that more time is needed, the Program Office will be given a one (1) week extension. Exceptions will be handled for individual cases as issues arise.

The VHA FOIA Office hopes this modified SI FOIA Clearance process will allow for faster and more efficient release and closure of SI FOIA Requests. Your cooperation and support in this process is most appreciated.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this process, please let me know. Thank you.

**Stephania H. Griffin, JD, RHIA**

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